UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/1997/NGO/102
8 April 1997

Original: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-third session
Agenda item 10

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

Joint written statement submitted by Franciscans International, International Association for Religious Freedom, Transnational Radical Party and World Confederation of Labour, non-governmental organizations in general consultative status, the African Association of Education for Development, the American Association of Jurists, Change, International Association of Democratic Lawyers, International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples, International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, Pax Romana and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status, Centre Europe-Tiers Monde, International Association of Educators for World Peace, International Educational Development, Inc., International Falcon Movement, International Movement against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism, Movement against Racism and for Friendship among Peoples, United Nations Association of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and World Organization against Torture, non-governmental organizations on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[7 April 1997]

GE.97-11853 (E)

The situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran demands a serious solution by the international community

1. The fifty-third session of the Commission on Human Rights has begun considering the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran following the adoption by the United Nations of the thirty-ninth resolution of condemnation of the violation of the internationally recognized norms of human rights by the Iranian regime. By adopting 39 resolutions in more than a decade, tne General Assembly has unequivocally stated its profound concern over the systematic abuse of human rights by the Government of Iran. Under such circumstances, Iranian officials' disregard for these resolutions and their persistence in violating fundamental human rights only reflect a lack of commitment to the most elementary principles of the international community.

2. Thus, the next resolution, if adopted by the current session of the Commission must therefore be considered a turning point and offer an opportunity to find ways which would compel the Government of Iran to respect the content of these resolutions. By sending a strong signal to the Islamic Republic of Iran, the United Nations must express its grave concern about this situation and look for appropriate measures to implement these resolutions. This is especially the case because numerous signs testify to the deteriorating situation of human rights in that country. In his interim report to the General Assembly, the Special Representative stated that the condition of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran might well have deteriorated since his earlier report to the fifty-second session of the Commission on Human Rights.

3. The refusal of the Government of Iran to allow a second visit by the Special Representative to Iran offers ample proof of this fact. It seems that Iranian officials are very concerned about in situ investigations by the Special Representative. A look at reports by non-governmental human rights organizations and published reports in the domestic and international media lead one to consider last year as one of the worst years of the Islamic Republic of Iran as far as human rights were concerned.

4. In the past year alone, the State-controlled media have reported at least 150 executions, three times the figure of last year. Most political executions are carried out secretly and many dissidents are arrested and executed under the pretext of non-political offences or "disloyalty to Islam and the State". On 22 June 1996, after several years of incarceration, Mr. Mehrdad Kalani, a political dissident who was arrested for meeting with the Special Representative (see E/CN.4/1992/34, para. 368), was executed along with a number of other political prisoners, including Mr. Ahmad Bakhtari who had met Mr. Copithorne last year in Evin prison. Many of these executions are carried out in public, an act considered contrary to the principles of international law by the Human Rights Committee. On 17 March 1996, Reuters quoted opposition sources as saying that in the first two weeks of the month, and simultaneous with the Commission's fifty-second session, 22 persons were hanged publicly in different cities. Doubtless, this inhuman conduct serves no purpose other than spreading an atmosphere of fear and terror among the people to prevent protest actions. The demonstration by tens of thousands of

people in Kermanshah, western Iran, last November that led to the death of 50 people and the arrest of hundreds and the execution of scores of protesters, as well as the protest gathering of oil workers in front of the Ministry of Oil in Tehran on 16 February 1997 which resulted in the arrest of the majority of the demonstrators and the death of two of them under torture, are examples of these protests.

5. Also last year, 32 Iranian dissidents were assassinated outside Iranian borders. The figure is four times the number of political killings last year. The responsibility of the Iranian regime's secret services and diplomatic offices in planning and executing these assassinations is no secret. In the course of the trial of a number of the killers of four Iranian Kurdish dissidents in Berlin, the German Federal Prosecutor recently declared that the order for the murders had been issued by the most senior officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran, meaning the President and the leader of the regime. German judicial officials had previously issued an arrest warrant for Intelligence Minister Ali Fallahian, on the same charge.

6. Investigations with respect to the 20 February 1996 assassination in Turkey of Mrs. Zahra Rajabi, a senior member of the National Council of Resistance (NCR) of Iran, confirmed that a deputy in the Iranian Consulate in Istanbul had led the hit squad. In Italy, Hamid Parandeh a former diplomat at the Iranian Embassy in Rome, is suspected of having taken part in the assassination in March 1993 of Mr. Mohammad Hossein Naghdi, the NCR representative in Italy.

7. Previously, the Swiss investigative magistrate Roland Chatelain concluded that the 24 April 1990 assassination of Professor Kazem Rajavi near Geneva was carried out by 13 agents of the Iranian regime, all of whom were dispatched to Tehran, using diplomatic passports. The resort to the use of sophisticated giant mortars to eliminate opponents abroad arouses greater concern among human rights advocates. Therefore, the international community is justified in having serious misgivings regarding respect by Iranian officials for the right to life.

8. The tragic plight of women in Iran and the comprehensive discrimination against them in their everyday life have been repeatedly exposed in different reports. What is the source of serious concern more than at any other time is the deterioration in their plight in the country. Government propaganda and hollow schemes can in no way conceal this fact. In a report from Tehran last February, Agence France Presse (AFP) quoted the State media about the adoption of a new series of binding regulations with respect to the compulsory dress code for women. Referring to comments by judicial officials, the report added that from now on a series of punishments including 3 to 12 months in jail, fines and 47 lashes of the whip, are stipulated for this offence. On the basis of its reporter's observations, AFP has repeatedly covered the widespread arrests of women for "mal-veiling". On the other hand, the mullahs' Interior Ministry recently confirmed the arrest of tens of thousands of people in the last eight months for drug trafficking. On this basis, in December, January and February alone, 730 people were arrested on this charge every day.

9. The suppression of religious minorities is another aspect of the violations of human rights by the Islamic Republic of Iran. The situation has taken on new dimensions in recent months. This year, there have been many reports about the murder of Sunni and Christian minorities. On 4 February 1996, the body of Dr. Ahmad Sayyah, a Baluchi Sunni leader, was found in Minab, south-eastern Iran. Two days earlier he had been arrested by government forces at Bandar airport. On 4 March the same year, two Sunni clergymen, Abdol-Malek Mullah-Zadeh, 45, and Abdol-Nasser Jamshid Zehi, 25, were murdered in Karachi, Pakistan. On 6 November 1996, the body of Abdol-Aziz Kazemi-Vajd, a leader of the Sunni community, was found near Zehedan, south-eastern Iran. Mullah Mohammad Rabi'i, another Sunni leader, was killed under dubious circumstances for protesting the broadcast of a television programme which had insulted the leaders of this community. On 28 September 1996, the body of Mohammad Baqer Yousefi, a Protestant pastor, was found in northern Iran. He had been hanged. Claims by Iranian officials that the case was one of "suicide over family problems" or "death due to a heart attack" are but a scheme to evade international censure.

10. The above examples, along with many other cases such as the flagrant violations of the freedom of expression and the crackdown on Iranian intellectuals in recent months, demonstrate that the Iranian regime is moving ahead with severe abuse of human rights. Does the international community intend to limit itself to the adoption of resolutions of condemnation of the Islamic Republic of Iran? The Iranian regime's disregard for these resolutions will strike irremediable blows to global decisions and available means to secure respect for universal and indivisible human rights. "Dialogue" as a means to improve human rights could not be justified if it did not result in clear and specific results to this end.

11. It is quite realistic that the time has come to take coordinated international action as the necessary guarantee to compel this regime to respect human rights norms. By adopting a strongly worded resolution and stating deep concern over the most recent cases of human rights abuses and the persistence of these crimes, the fifty-third session of the Commission on Human Rights must stress the need for such decisiveness.

- - - - -